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PRESS RELEASE

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United States Attorney Michael A. Battle announced today, federal charges against 22 defendants, charging Christopher Boone, Tyshawn Carney, Maurice Chambers, Jerry Davis, Edwin Garner, Lemuel Goodman, Carl Jackson, Jerome Johnson, Calvin Lockhart, Ron Lockhart, Anthony McCutcheon, Markita Mack, Demario Mack, Darrius Molson, Acie Moorner, James Mosley, Jessie Ortiz, Tony Romer, Donnie Threatt, Clint Walker, Clarence Weatherby, and Damon Weaver, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 860, distribution of drugs in or near a public housing facility, carrying a maximum penalty of 40 years imprisonment, as well as minimum mandatory imprisonment, a fine of \$2,000,000.00, or both. It should be noted that the fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime . . . is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. **(Disciplinary Rule 7-107(B)(6)).**

Assistant U.S. Attorney George C. Burgasser stated that the charges against the defendants is a culmination of a six month undercover investigation targeting crack cocaine distribution in and around the Buffalo Municipal Housing Developments. Federal District Court Magistrate Judge Leslie G. Foschio authorized the 22 federal arrest warrants and six search warrants.

Today's operation is part of an ongoing initiative, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Buffalo Violent Crime Career Criminal Task Force ("CCTF") and the United States Attorney's Office, to target and prosecute individuals who violate Title 21 United States Code, Section 860 or who are known to frequent public housing facilities or school zones for the purpose of selling drugs. The primary focus of today's operation, is the Douglas Towers Housing Development in which many senior citizens reside. Based on numerous complaints of drug dealing from residents of the housing development and a request from Sharon West, Executive Director of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority, the CCTF began investigating the activity at the Douglas Towers and making undercover drug buys. These buys then led to additional undercover drug buys at Commodore Perry Housing Development.

The Federal statute being utilized enhances prison sentences for defendants who sell drugs on or within 1,000 feet of public housing facilities or school zones. As part of a prosecution, the United States Attorney's Office charges the defendant under Title 21 U.S.C. Section 860 for the drug sale. This statute carries a mandatory minimum and also doubles the maximum sentence, fine and supervised release. It also imposes a sentencing enhancement under the Federal sentencing guidelines.

The ongoing initiative was established to look into various street gangs that dealt in "crack", cocaine, heroin and guns in and around the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) public housing developments. The original initiative and investigation began with the Schaffer Village Posse (a local gang operating out of Shaffer Village Housing

Development), but due to the impact, has been expanded into other public housing developments located throughout the Buffalo metropolitan area.

These local gangs or loosely affiliated groups greatly affect the quality of life of the law abiding tenants in the public housing developments and are responsible for the majority of the drug trafficking and the random acts of violence that occur in the public housing developments. If the individual resides in the housing authority's development, a conviction can result in his removal from the BMHA public housing facilities.

There have been more than 90 defendants since the initiative began with today's arrests. This is a significant increase over the 11 original targets of the Schaffer Village Posse.

Various techniques have been employed in the ongoing initiative, including the use of undercover agents, confidential sources, pen registers, grand jury, search warrants and surveillance.

The charges were the culmination of an investigation on the part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter J. Ahearn. Additionally, the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority Police, Erie County Sheriffs Department, the Town Of Cheektowaga Police, the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority Police, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement assisted through the CCTF in the investigation.

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